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Ministry of Education

MISSION SCHOOL DISTRICT SIGNS ABORIGINAL AGREEMENT

MISSION – Maple Ridge-Mission MLA Randy Hawes, Aboriginal leaders and officials from the Mission board of education celebrated today the signing of B.C.'s 36th Aboriginal education enhancement agreement to help improve Aboriginal student performance.

"Every student deserves the opportunities our great school system offers," said Hawes. "Aboriginal education enhancement agreements are part of this government's commitment to build stronger relationships with First Nations across B.C."

This education enhancement agreement for Mission has set specific goals in the areas of academics, culture, personal development and positive learning environments. The goals are:

- To ensure that Aboriginal students are successful in literacy and numeracy by Grade 3;
- To improve Grade 7 to 8 transition rates for Aboriginal students;
- To ensure that Aboriginal students feel a sense of belonging in their schools; and
- To increase the understanding of Aboriginal culture for all students.

"Aboriginal students, like every student, need a strong cultural bond and good academic supports to succeed," said Shirley Bond, Minister of Education. "Enhancement agreements help districts build more relevant and effective education opportunities for Aboriginal students."

There are 792 Aboriginal students in the Mission school district this year, about 12 per cent of the district's total enrolment. The district serves the In-SHUCK-ch Nation, the
Leq'á: mel, Kwantlen, Matsqui, and Scowlitz First Nations, in addition to Métis and other Aboriginal students.

"For my family, what is really important is the increased support for my children and how much Aboriginal education is growing in Mission. It is giving my sons a positive future," said Ms. T. Ramsay, parent of two Aboriginal students. "Aboriginal education has helped them feel good about themselves and this will help them get to where they need to go."

"We have a vision, and that vision is for all of our students to be successful learners," said Mission board of education chair Carol Hamilton. "The signing of the enhancement agreement signifies the commitment of Mission public schools, the board of education and the elders, families and educators of the Aboriginal community."

Thirty-six B.C. school districts have signed Aboriginal education enhancement agreements to date. The

agreements support the Province's Pacific Leadership Agenda to build new relationships with First Nations, and to close gaps in health, housing, education and economic opportunities, and are one component of the Province's strategy to improve Aboriginal student achievement. Others include the new First Nations education jurisdiction agreement and developing Aboriginal content for K-12 curriculum. Aboriginal education enhancement agreements also support the Province's goal of becoming the best educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent.

The Province is investing an estimated $51.1 million a year – $1,014 per student – for Aboriginal education in 2007-08. The funds are used to support Aboriginal language and culture programs, Aboriginal support service programs, and other localized Aboriginal education programs.

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